

Futures Group Encourages Expanded Review of Inpatient Options

At its February 24 meeting, the Vermont State Hospital Futures Advisory Group reaffirmed its recommendations of November 16, 2005 with respect to criteria for developing new inpatient psychiatric services in Vermont, but encouraged the Secretary of Human Services also to explore alternatives to Fletcher Allen as the primary site. The criteria approved on November 16 identified Fletcher Allen as the preferred site for a primary inpatient facility and recommended adding inpatient capacity at one or more other hospitals that already offer psychiatric inpatient care. Review of alternatives to a Fletcher Allen site also would be part of the Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration's (BISHCA's) "Conceptual Certificate of Need (CON)" process. The minutes of both the February 24 and the November 16 meetings are posted on the Mental Health Update web page.

Futures: Extra Meeting To Be Scheduled

Futures Group meetings are currently scheduled for March 20 and May 15 (see meeting list, below). An April meeting will be scheduled soon.

Futures: Housing Work Group To Hold First Meeting

The first meeting of the Futures housing work group will be held at the Vermont Association for Mental Health office, 43 State Street, Montpelier, on Wednesday, March 8, from 2 – 3:30 p.m. Present members include Brian Smith of the Health Department staff, Ken Liberto and Linda Corey of the Futures Group, and Hillary Cole, manager of the Safe Haven Project in Orange County, a homeless shelter that serves persons with mental illness who are homeless and do not fit well in more traditional shelters. Joining them by phone will be G. Shinn of the Mental Health Association of Tulsa who will detail housing success from the perspective of a mental health organization that has experienced hospital closings in Oklahoma.

Futures: Staff To Seek Public Input on Inpatient Concept

State and Fletcher Allen Health Care staff and representatives of the City of Burlington and the Howard Center met last week to discuss approaches to seeking public participation in developing the concept, recommended by the Futures Group, of locating a new psychiatric inpatient facility at Fletcher Allen. Early next steps include meeting with Burlington City department heads, regular briefings for the city council, and meetings with neighborhood planning assemblies and delegations of elected officials. It also was agreed that it is important to meet with the business community, social service agencies and other concerned stakeholders. Staff agreed to emphasize that

- At this point, the idea of additional psychiatric inpatient capacity at Fletcher Allen really is a concept, not a proposal.

- We are in the process of gathering information about the number of beds needed and the feasibility of possible sites, to come up with a proposal for discussion.
- We are taking steps to engage the public early in this process, however, so that any proposal that emerges is informed by the needs and insights of the community.

Staff agreed that, at this point, a committee will not be formed to deal with these tasks, but that efforts will be made to find a formal organizational sponsor to guide and organize an on-going consultation and concept development process with Burlington and Chittenden County stakeholders.

Futures: Psychiatrist Joins Group

Sandy Steingard, M.D., of the Howard Center has joined the Futures Advisory Group, taking the community service psychiatrist seat. An up-to-date list of Futures Group members is posted on the Mental Health Update web page.

Futures: Architecture+ Visits VSH Today

Representatives from Architecture+, the firm investigating Vermont's options for new psychiatric inpatient capacities, was scheduled to visit Vermont State Hospital this morning and to meet with a focus group made up either of patients or of staff (they will return for whichever group is not seen today). This afternoon they are scheduled to meet with the facilities work group in Burlington to discuss the "smaller capacity" inpatient options at Rutland Regional Medical Center and Retreat Healthcare.

Futures: Actuarial Firm Consults With Corrections

Milliman, Inc., the actuarial consulting firm studying the need for inpatient psychiatric beds, conferred this week with staff from the departments of Health and of Corrections to discuss the need the Vermont inmate population has for acute psychiatric care. Assessing Corrections' inpatient bed needs is part of Milliman's assignment.

NAMI Issues Report Card on States' Mental Health Efforts

The National Alliance on Mental Illness has issued a report card on "America's health care system for serious mental illness," grading the efforts in 50 states and the District of Columbia. The average national grade was "D." While crediting Vermont's community care system and granting an "A" in the area of Recovery Supports, the report issued Vermont a "C-" overall, citing issues surrounding the Vermont State Hospital and controversies involving stigma and mental illness. Six other states got the same grade as Vermont and 15 got better grades. Vermont got "D" for Information Access, "D" for Services, "C-" for Infrastructure, and "A" for Recovery Supports. The full report can be read at www.nami.org.

Group To Discuss Better Scheduling of ONH Hearings

An ad hoc group will meet on March 22 from 10 – 11:30 a.m. to discuss working with the court system to improve the scheduling of hearings on the modification and revocation of orders of non-hospitalization (ONHs). The meeting, in the Claudia Stone (Hanks) Conference Room in Waterbury, will be chaired by Assistant Attorney General Wendy Beininger and invited participants include Nick Emlen, Michael Hartman, Jack McCullough, Kristin Chandler, Michael

Sabourin and Laura Ziegler. Recommendations from the meeting will inform further staff discussions with Court Administrator Lee Suskin.

Bi-weekly Report Filed With Board of Health

Vermont State Hospital has filed its bi-weekly report on Department of Justice matters with the Board of Health, pursuant to the conditions on the hospital's license. There were no new developments to report. The letter is posted on the Mental Health Update web page.

Act 114 Report Filed With Legislature

Each year, an independent consultant reviews and reports to the Legislature on the implementation of Act 114, the Vermont statute governing the administration of involuntary non-emergency psychiatric medications to clients of the public mental health system who are committed to the care and custody of the Commissioner of Health. This year's report, filed on February 28, is posted on the Mental Health Update web page.

Upcoming Meetings

- **Vermont State Hospital Futures Advisory Group** (currently scheduled)
 - March 20, 2-4:30 p.m., Room 100, Stanley Hall, Waterbury State Office Complex.
 - April: An April meeting is planned and will be scheduled soon.
 - May 15, 2-4:30 p.m., Skylight Conference Room, Waterbury State Office Complex.
 - June 26, 2- 4:30 p.m., Skylight Conference Room, Waterbury State Office Complex.
- **Futures Clinical Care Management Work Group** (*Please note change of dates and locations*)
 - March 10, 9-11 a.m., Room 107 (break-out: Room 102), Stanley Hall, Waterbury State Office Complex.
 - NOTE CHANGE: ~~April 7~~ April 28, 9-11 a.m., Skylight Conference Room, Waterbury State Office Complex.
- **Futures Residential Recovery (sub-acute) Work Group** (*Please note change of locations*)
 - March 15, 9-11 a.m., Washington County Mental Health Services, ~~9 Heaton Street, Montpelier~~ 2 Moody Court, Waterbury (green building east of railroad station).
 - April 5, 9-11 a.m., Washington County Mental Health Services, ~~9 Heaton Street, Montpelier~~ 2 Moody Court, Waterbury (green building east of railroad station).
 - April 26, 9-11 a.m., Washington County Mental Health Services, ~~9 Heaton Street, Montpelier~~ 2 Moody Court, Waterbury (green building east of railroad station).

- **Futures Facilities Work Group (With Architecture+)**

- March 14, 11 a.m., (Vermont Psychiatric Survivors-hosted consumer focus group), Room 3B, Health Department, 108 Cherry Street, Burlington.
- ~~March 14, 1-4 p.m., Room 3B, Health Department, 108 Cherry Street, Burlington.~~ This meeting has been cancelled. An A+ work team will spend the day on-site at Fletcher Allen, evaluating options for siting the new inpatient facility. (The 11 a.m. focus group, above, will go as scheduled.)
- April 3, 1-4 p.m., Room 3B, Health Department, 108 Cherry Street, Burlington.
- May 22, 1-4 p.m., Room 3B, Health Department, 108 Cherry Street, Burlington.
- June 12, all day, for presentations; various locations to be announced.

- **Futures Housing Work Group**

- March 8, 2 – 3:30 p.m., Vermont Association for Mental Health office, 43 State Street, Montpelier.

- **Statewide Program Standing Committee for Adult Mental Health**

- March 13, 1 – 4:30 p.m., Skylight Room, Waterbury State Office Complex. Agenda is posted on the Mental Health Update web page.

- **One-time Meeting To Discuss ONH Scheduling**

- March 22, 10 – 11:30 a.m. Claudia Stone Conference Room, Hanks Building, Waterbury State Office Complex.

VSH Census

The Vermont State Hospital census was 46 as of midnight Thursday night. The average census for the past 45 days was slightly more than 48.

Questions and comments about the Mental Health Update may be directed to John Howland Jr. (howland@vdh.state.vt.us). If you are reading a print version of this Update, you may find the web version at www.healthyvermonters.info/mh/mhindex.shtml